

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 125

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PINR, SE

SUBJECT: EFFORT REPORTEDLY UNDERWAY TO REVITALIZE OPPOSITION
POLITICAL PARTY

1. SUPPORTERS OF OUSTED PRESIDENT JAMES MANCHAM HAVE ALLEGEDLY EMBARKED ON ATTEMPT TO SET UP OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY ON SEYCHELLES' SECOND LARGEST ISLAND OF PRASLIN (POPULATION 5,000). ALTHOUGH MANCHAM'S SEYCHELLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP) WAS NOT OFFICIALLY PROSCRIBED WHEN JUNE 05, 1977 COUP D'ETAT BROUGHT F.A. RENE AND HIS SEYCHELLES PEOPLES' UNITED PARTY (SPUP) TO POWER, SDP, IN EFFECT, CEASED TO FUNCTION AND PARTY HEADQUARTERS WAS CLOSED.

2. APPARENT REVITALIZATION EFFORT IS BEING ORGANIZED BY DAN PAYET, PRALINOISE BUSINESSMAN AND FORMER SDP M.P. FROM PRASLIN, A TRADITIONAL

SDP STRONGHOLD. IN JANUARY, JUST BEFORE ELECTIONS WERE TO BE HELD FOR POST OF SPUP BRANCH CHAIRMAN ON PRASLIN, PAYET AND HIS SDP
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FOLLOWERS JOINED SPUP. AT PARTY MEETING IN EARLY FEBRUARY CHAIRED BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM GUY SINON, PAYET AND LARGE CONTINGENT OF FORMER SDP MEMBERS WERE AMONG 200-300 PARTICIPANTS.

ACCORDING SOURCES ON PRASLIN, WHEN ELECTION OF PAYET AS BRANCH CHAIRMAN APPEARED CERTAIN, SINON RULED THAT PAYET AND OTHER RECENTLY INDUCTED PARTY MEMBERS WERE INELIGIBLE TO VOTE OR HOLD

PARTY OFFICE. AT THIS POINT PAYET AND HIS FOLLOWERS WALKED OUT AND SPUP WHEEL HORSE MRS. DENIS COELHO WAS ELECTED WITH 17 VOTES AMONG 60 REMAINING PARTICIPANTS.

3. SEYCHELLES ONLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER, WEEKEND LIFE, HAS REPORTED THAT PAYET IS ORGANIZING FEB 19 RALLY ON PRASLIN TO PROTEST "INJUSTICE" SHOWN BY SINON AT ELECTION MEETING. NEWSPAPER ESTIMATES THAT AS MANY AS 1,000 PRALINOISE ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND AND WEEKEND LIFE EDITOR BERNARD VERLAQUE HAS TOLD EMBASSY THAT GROUP FROM PRINCIPAL ISLAND OF MAHE ARE ALSO MAKING PLANS TO PARTICIPATE. VERLAQUE ANTICIPATES PAYET WILL RENOUNCE HIS SPUP MEMBERSHIP AND PROBABLY ANNOUNCE FORMATION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTY. AT FEB 15 MEETING, MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS OGILVY BERLOUIS INDICATED TO BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER PUGH THAT PROJECTED RALLY WAS DISCUSSED AT CABINET MEETING FEB 14 AND "CONTINGENCY" PLANS ARE READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN CASE OF DISTURBANCES. AS THINGS NOW STAND, HOWEVER, DESPITE FACT THAT PRASLIN IS 28 MILES FROM PRINCIPAL ISLAND OF MAHE, BERLOUIS IS NOT PLANNING TO INCREASE SECURITY FORCES ON ISLAND. WE ESTIMATE ONLY ABOUT TWENTY UNARMED POLICE OFFICERS AND TRAINEES ARE PRESENTLY STATIONED ON PRASLIN. BERLOUIS RULED OUT LAW AND ORDER ROLE FOR LIBERATION ARMY ADDING UTILIZATION OF MAHE-BASED RIOT POLICE (SPECIAL FORCE) WAS POSSIBLE BACK UP FORCE. BERLOUIS SAID GOVERNMENT VIEW IS THAT PAYET WAS "INSINCERE" WHEN HE JOINED SPUP AND IS BEING USED AS STRAW MAN BY FORMER MINISTER OF TOURISM AND AVIATION DAVID
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JOUBERT (NOW IN EXILE IN LONDON) TO GENERATE DISSENT AND TEST SDP STRANGTH.

4. COMMENT: AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, PRESIDENT RENE AND OTHERS IN GOS CONTINUE TO CONSIDER JOUBERT AS A PRINCIPAL EXTERNAL THREAT. FOR DECADE PRIOR TO COUP, JOUBERT REPRESENTED PRASLIN IN COLONIAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND POST-INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. PRASLIN

CAME TO BE REGARDED AS VIRTUAL JOUBERT FIEFDOM AND HE REPORTEDLY RETAINS CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. SINCE COUP, EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NUMBER OF SCATTERED REPORTS OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT SLOGANS BEING PAINTED ON WALLS OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND FLYING OF PRE-COUP FLAG AT NUMBER OF HOMES, INCLUDING PAYET'S. GOS REACTION TO PROJECTED RALLY (WHICH IS FIRST ORGAINED, OVERT POLITICAL ACTION BY KNOWN MANCHAM FOLLOWERS) MAY PROVIDE SOME INSIGHT INTO GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD MULTI-PARTY POLITICS AND ITS WILLINGNESS TO TOLERATE ACTIVE OPPOSITION.
MATTSON

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